

Notes for Whitewater Wilderness Ranch Field Trip: Windy-Shingle Project

April 6, 2017; Pollock, Idaho

These notes are intended to capture the broader topics, issues and concerns relative to the Windy-Shingle proposed project that were discussed at a field trip to the south treatment area on April 6, 2017.

Attendees

- **Public:** Seven members of the public attended. Most were landowners/residents of the Whitewater Wilderness Ranch area.
- **Forest Service employees attending:** Jeff Shinn, Salmon River District Ranger; Kevin Barger, Fire/Fuels Specialist; Andy Lane, Timber Sale Administrator; AJ Helgenberg, Silviculturist; Craig Phillips, Project Team Leader

Issues/Concerns/Feedback from Public Participants

- **Increased traffic:** Concern was expressed that increasing openness through timber harvest and prescribed burning could increase motorized traffic in the area and incursions into areas restricted to non-motorized use. Most of the attendees did not express overarching disagreement with the proposed treatments, but for the secondary effects of the treatments. One attendee stated that he regularly checks gates to restricted areas and finds lock have been cut and gates driven around. Forest Service staff reminded the public attendees that when incursions and other unpermitted activity is observed, it should be reported. While law enforcement resources are very limited, reports help the Ranger prioritize those available and justify seeking additional resources.
- **Big game security:** There was concern that harvesting trees would reduce security cover for elk and deer in the area. It was suggested by the local residents that a seasonal closure on roads could reduce that impact. Ranger Shinn pointed out that road closures are beyond the scope of this project and are part of the Forest's overall travel planning process. It was suggested that the type of forage available for big game that would result from harvest is not currently a limiting factor in the area. It was acknowledged by the public attendees that the Rapid River Idaho Roadless Area, adjacent to the south project area, provides abundant secure cover for big game, and that it is heavily utilized when traffic increases on the private and public land near the Whitewater Wilderness Ranch.
- **Economic value:** It was noted that the primary access road to the area will need upgrading to support logging trucks. A question was raised is the cost of those and other road repairs will make the sale economically feasible. Another resident noted that there did not appear to be significant sale volume in much of unit 11, and questioned the value of that sale unit. Another resident stated that the unit 11 vegetation appears healthy and not in need of treatment. Andy Lane stated that the Forest Service does not do deficit sales. The



Residents of the Whitewater Wilderness Ranch Local and Forest Service staff discuss the Windy-Shingle potential treatment areas at the January 31st public

project is currently estimated to be a profitable sale. Unit 11 will be evaluated when the timber sale is marked. If the desired outcome for that area cannot be achieved by the planned prescription in a manner that makes economic sense, the unit may be dropped from the sale or a different prescription applied. AJ Helgenberg pointed out that unit 11 was historically much less densely forested than currently, due to frequent fire. Ranger Shinn noted that the prescription for unit 11 has value beyond the timber. It makes sense to reduce fire risk now, before it becomes critical, since we aren't likely to be back with a project in this area for several, or many years. Due to its adjacency to private land, it can serve as a line of defense for firefighters in the event of a wildfire. He stated that he has an obligation to his firefighters to protect their safety, and treating areas like unit 11 help provide safe places for them to do their dangerous work when they are called upon to protect private land.



A Forest Service employee discussed fuel loads in an area adjacent to unit 11.

- **Post-harvest condition:** One attendee stated he often saw hard, straight edges at the boundary of timber harvest areas, and asked what the post-harvest condition would look like. AJ responded that the Forest Service doesn't harvest timber in a way that creates hard edges if we can avoid it. The post-harvest condition would be much more open than the current condition, but that trees would be left in clumps and hard edges would be avoided. Andy pointed out trees that were likely to be retained at each of the locations. He pointed out existing snags and live trees of lower market value as examples of those that would be left to create future snags. He identified trees that as examples of those that would be left as seed trees and shelterwood clumps in regeneration harvest areas.



A Forest Service employee discussed planned prescriptions for unit on the Windy-Shingle project with local residents

- **Anticipated schedule:** When asked when harvest would begin, Andy replied that the project would likely be split in to two sales; a north sale and a south sale. The sale could be marked this summer by Forest Service personnel or agents of the Forest Service, advertised in the winter, and potentially sold next spring. The contract would have a three-year period of performance, and the successful bidder could harvest at his convenience, within the conditions of the contract. He stated that most logging occurs between June and October for best weather and road conditions.